

CREATING AN AGE-FRIENDLY AUSTIN

Recent Statistics

- “Over the next 50 years, the number of Americans aged 65 and older is expected to more than double to 92 million; those 85 and older will likely triple to 18 million.” (*White House Conference on Aging, 2015*)
- “The percentage of Americans in the senior set (65+) has risen from 12.4% to 14.1%, and their share of the population is projected to climb to 19.3% by 2030.” (*Forbes, October 2014*)
- “Austin may have a reputation as a youthful place, but it’s also getting older rapidly. The senior population has surged 91.7% since 2000, amid a general population boom – the share of seniors in the metro area has expanded from 7.2% to 9.2%, placing it third on the Forbes’ 2014 list of U.S. Cities Going Gray The Fastest.” (*Forbes, October 2014*)

Supporting Today’s Senior Population *and* the Elders of Tomorrow

Since 2013, important accomplishments have been achieved as a result of the work of the [Mayor’s Task Force on Aging](#), including the formation of Austin’s Commission on Seniors and AustinUP, a non-profit that is working across sectors to raise the profile of our senior population and prepare the next generation for the future of aging. However, Austin lacks a plan for accomplishing several [recommendations outlined in the final Task Force report](#). Consequently, Austin is at risk of losing its age-friendly designation and is lagging behind other U.S. cities.

Supporting and implementing the **Age-friendly Austin Plan** will ensure recognition for our city and serve today’s older population. Equally important, the effort *also* will support younger generations, i.e., the “elders” of tomorrow, by establishing policies and priorities that will benefit Austinites for years to come.

In addition, making Austin age-friendly will expand our city’s role in the “Longevity Economy.” As Austin transforms into a vibrant, welcoming and supportive community for older adults, Austin will see a positive economic impact as new businesses that serve older adults relocate or expand here. Additionally, these for-profit ventures could provide additional philanthropic resources to help support our most vulnerable or at-risk seniors.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

1. What is an “age-friendly” community?

In its final report, the Mayor’s Task Force on Aging recommended that Austin be designated an age-friendly community under the [AARP Network of Age-friendly Communities](#), an affiliate of the [World Health Organization’s Age-friendly Cities and Communities Program](#). This program currently involves more than 287 cities, including New York, NY; Boston, MA; Portland, OR; Augusta, GA; London, England; Melbourne, Australia and many others.

Partners in the network of age-friendly communities are challenging Austin to do more to prepare for the rapid aging of the U.S. population:

- Recognize the wide range of capacities and resources among older people
- Anticipate and respond flexibly to aging-related needs and preferences
- Respect older persons' decisions and lifestyle choices
- Protect those who are most vulnerable; and
- Promote older persons' inclusion in and contribution to all areas of community life

2. Why is it important for Austin to be age-friendly? Why now?

Everyone knows that Austin has long been one of the fastest-growing metropolitan areas in the country. What most people don't know is that while our overall population grew nearly 40% between 2000 and 2010, the number of us over the age of 55 grew by 80%. Soon, we will have more older adults than children in Central Texas. Making sure that they can participate fully in all that Austin has to offer for as long as possible benefits us all.

3. How much is all of this going to cost? Will the City of Austin be expected to pay for it all?

Most age-friendly cities receive some level of support from city resources. However, securing resources and partnerships above and beyond that will be crucial to success. The Age-friendly Austin Plan includes a list of proposed partner organizations for each "domain" or area of interest. The Age-friendly Austin working group also is exploring grants and public-private partnerships for additional funding.

4. What other businesses or organizations will be invited to participate? The Age-friendly Austin working group will expand the proposed lists of partner organizations by increasing its promotion, communication and outreach to community organizations and businesses.

5. How will you prioritize these action items? Specific actions will be horizontally prioritized across the eight domains, with annual reviews/assessments to ensure that the focus is realistic and timely.

6. Why should the City of Austin lend support to this plan when it may only benefit a subset of our community? First, many programs that are good for older adults, e.g., safe streets and sidewalks, benefit people of all ages. Second, making Austin age-friendly not only serves today's older population, the effort also supports younger generations, i.e., the "elders" of tomorrow, by establishing policies and priorities that will benefit Austinites for years to come.

"We think of them as forever young, but millennials are the first generation in human history who can not only anticipate reaching the age of 90 in large numbers, but who will spend about one-third of their lives as what we now refer to as 'old people.'" ...The next time the conversation turns to longevity, let's talk about the young." ("What Millennials Already Know about Growing Old," *Time* magazine, June 27, 2016)

7. Who is going to oversee the plan's progress? AustinUP, with guidance and input from Austin's Commission on Seniors and AARP Texas, will lead and coordinate the process.

8. How will progress be reported? An annual report will be created and distributed to the Mayor and City Council as well as to our partner organizations. It also will be communicated to the public via traditional media, social media and on the Age-friendly Austin website, <http://www.agefriendlyaustin.com>.

9. What can Austin learn from other cities in Texas and the U.S.? Can our city benefit from shared best practices? How? Austin will participate in the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities, which facilitates communication and collaboration among age-friendly cities in Texas and the U.S. AARP hosts an annual conference, the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities Conference, specifically to promote this type of information exchange.

10. Are there any additional benefits for the City if it supports this plan? According to a 2013 AARP/Oxford Economics study: “A powerful new force is changing the face of America, composed of 106 million people responsible for at least \$7.1 trillion in annual economic activity—a figure that is expected to reach well over \$13.5 trillion in real terms by 2032. This is the Longevity Economy, representing the sum of all economic activity serving the needs of Americans over 50 and including both the products and services they purchase directly and the further economic activity this spending generates.”

As Austin expands its role in this longevity marketplace and earns a reputation for being a vibrant, welcoming and supportive community for older adults, Austin will see a positive economic impact as businesses and services relocate or expand here. Additionally, these for-profit ventures could provide additional philanthropic resources to help support our most vulnerable or at-risk seniors.

11. How can I get involved in this project? Transforming Austin into an age-friendly city will take the commitment and participation of people of all ages. There are numerous ways individuals, professionals and organizations can work together to make Austin age-friendly. To get involved, please visit the Age-friendly Austin website: <http://www.agefriendlyaustin.com>.